

[Chaco Period]

Terena

had their mouths open, but they could not speak, so the twins gave them a language and put them into a place where they could live. But the Indians had no fire and shivered with cold. The twins then ordered the hare to go and fetch fire which at this time was kept by Takeoré. Takeoré refused to give it to the hare and stood over the fire with open legs. The hare took a bean, *hicoá*, and threw it into the fire and when the bean burst Takeoré was frightened so badly that the hare was able to steal a live coal and run away. But Takeoré pursued the hare and when he almost caught him, the hare hid in a hollow tree. Takeoré thrust a stick into the hole to kill the hare. The hare cut his foot and let the blood run over the stick. When Takeoré saw the blood he believed that the hare was dead and went away. The hare then picked up the live coal, ran to the Indians and threw the coal into a field which caught on fire. The Indians now had fire and were warm.

The Indians were hungry but they had no tools and did not know how to obtain food. The twins then gave the Indians all their tools. To the men *Yárikoywakái* gave the ax, *poróoti*; the digging stick, *lome't*; the knife, *pirisú*; the sickle, *yopilokóti*; the war club, *pul'd'oi*; and the bow, *shakié*; arrows, *shumé*; and the spear, *suiké*. To the women the twins gave the spindle, *hopéc*. *Yárikoywakái* then taught the Indians how to hunt, fish, and grow crops.

The culture hero legends provide a mythical charter for the Terena way of life. The importance of the earth is stressed. The Indians came out of the earth. Agriculture was a male occupation while women spun cotton. The culture hero gave them language, fire, and economic techniques. The cunning necessary to survive in the struggle of life is stressed in the story of the hare stealing fire. The twins, *Yárikoywakái*, were not the creators of the world of animals and men. They were benevolent beings who freed the Indians and taught them the arts of social life.

On the other hand, the Terena have evil spirits in their pantheon of supernatural beings, such as *Vanónu*, *Voropi*, and *Hiháiyiné*. It is curious to note that these mythical monsters are the causes of heavy rains and floods, physical phenomena which occur in the Chaco and which were a real danger to the Terena. Referring to a flood, *ivoyóneti*, we have the following story:

It rained without stopping. It was *Vanónu* speaking from the sky, it was *Vanónu* coming down. The rain covered the field, water was overflowing everywhere. Then there was a shaman who began to sing and shake his gourd rattle, *tsáaka*. If *Vanónu* came to the ground everything would be covered with water. The shaman sang telling *Vanónu* to go back into the sky. Then *Vanónu* spoke like thunder, the Indians heard *Vanónu's* voice, but they could not understand him. *Vanónu* was evil and was

/51.cont./

[Traditional Culture]

81. Idem: 248.

But

77/
82/
[99] much greater--still according to the same source--was the respect they showed for the "small constellation which they called the seven stars and whose appearance at specific points of the sky was the reason for an annual festival." (82) Never-

82. Ibid.

theless, it cannot be said that there was a cult of these entities, or of the "great spirit," and much less of the Pleiades, as that [17] constellation is identified. Moreover, Metraux observes in this regard that "among some peoples of the Chaco, the celestial bodies or natural phenomena are personified and are considered helpful or dangerous, but there is no evidence that a [20] regular cult is rendered to them." (83) And, referring to the

83. Alfred Metraux,
1944:294.

Terena, he says that these Indians "regarded the return of the Pleiades (merely) as a sign for the performance of magic rites and for various festivities." (84)

84. Idem:295.

J. Bach(85) provides a very good description of how these

776
[117]
[82] 85. "The only religious festival they celebrate is the one that corresponds to our Holy Week and to the passage of the seven stars; this festival lasts for seven days. In all the aldeas, in front

/404/

[131] The territory of the Tereno /Terena/ Indians extends west
[361] of the Brazilian city of Miranda to the Bolivian border. Their
first village lies two leguas, the last one about 12-14 leguas,
101 from the above-mentioned city. The Terenos are Chaco Indians
[167] and migrated about 60 years ago from the Bolivian Chaco to their
present habitation site. In external appearance they greatly
resemble the Lenguas and have also some customs and practices
142 in common with them. The men are mostly slender and tall,
and at the same time muscular; the women are medium-sized,
likewise robust, and many are corpulent. The /405/ face is
broad with prominent cheekbones, the nose broad, pressed flat,
the nostrils large, the eyes dark-brown, the mouth wide, pro-
302 truding, the hair blue-black, stiff, and coarse. Most pluck out
178 the eyelashes and beard hair, but the present generation seems
to want to abandon this bad custom, for I saw some young girls
771 and men who were equipped with very beautiful eyelashes. The
797 Terenos call themselves Christians, despite the fact that they
have no notion of Christian belief. Their children are neither
baptized nor confirmed; also, they do not know our Christian
holidays. I never saw Terenos praying, and no one wore a rosary,
[178] which is considered the chief sign of Catholic faith here. They
[P21] cling to their old customs and, like their forefathers, still worship
648 the stars. In the war against Paraguay they served the Brazilians
well, and as a consequence some caciques of Brazil held a
commission as alferes, which they showed me with great pride
361 and asked me to read it aloud. I visited six villages (aldeas),
[114] which were not very different from one another. An aldea con-
sists of three to six family-huts and some small ranchos. The
592 family huts are low, but very long and spacious, and in some of
them 30 and more people live under a common head. In most
cases this is the oldest man of the family. All the daughters re-
main in the hut in which they were born, and they marry there.
[591] As soon as a girl marries, a new bed is built, and the young hus-
[353] band moves into the family hut of his wife. In one hut I counted
12 such beds, which were set up in two rows, similar to a hospital.

/407 cont. /

- 585 standing near her. The bridegroom now sits down beside the
273 bride, whereupon the latter exchanges her bottle of caña with the
bottle of the bridegroom. /408/ The bridegroom's family then
goes home and drinks up the bride's liquor. The bridegroom re-
mains in the bride's hut and empties the other bottle with her
family. The marriage ties are knotted by this exchange of the
591 two bottles. The husband always remains in the family hut of his
585 wife. If there are more marriageable girls there, he takes a
second wife, but no ceremony takes place in connection with this.
- 796 Upa a ne voty. Festival of the seven stars. This great festi-
val of the Terenos is celebrated in the month of April. A week
before the festival two old men go from hut to hut: the one
arranges for musicians; the other invites the men for the scheduled
[273] night. The guests must provide everything necessary, especially
caña, before the festival, for the more there is to drink, the
more splendid the festival. On the scheduled night, between
one and two o'clock, all the men gather in the festival plaza.
One of the oldest men stands in the middle of the plaza, holding
a lance in his hand; the others squat on the ground, forming a
circle around the old man. Then the old man speaks, his face
turned toward the east: I am the grandfather of all the chiefs
who live in the east! He then enumerates all the names of the
latter known to him. Then he turns to the north, then to the
west, then to the south, and repeats the same thing. In this way
he pretends to be the grandfather of all the important men of the
[821] world. He then looks toward the sky and asks the seven stars for
[272] rain and implores them to protect his people from war, sickness,
snakebites, etc. This prayer lasts for some hours. As soon as the
prayer is ended, the old man lets out a howl, whereupon the whole
company jumps up, howls, rattles, shoots, and makes a terrible
noise with all sorts of instruments. The old man then goes home,
while the company goes around the plaza with shouting and up-
796 roar until dawn. Four to six small leaf-houses are built around
533 the plaza for the musicians. Toward six o'clock in the evening
the above-mentioned old man gives a sign with the yntaca,

/89 cont. /

owned, with the exception of his vesture, which is inherited by his son, who carries on in power. /90/

Over the cacique's grave they build a small rancho of palm leaves, as a mark of distinction.

Cóchómonery or Cacique. The power of the cacique falls from fathers to sons. When the first son or daughter of the cacique is born, the latter, a few moments later, breathes into the mouth of the newborn, which signifies that at the age of 15, approximately, he will receive power and will be ordained to caciqueship, following his father in power as soon as the latter dies. When the heirs reach the age of 15, the cacique holds a big fiesta, for this calling together all the caciques of the other aldeas. Dressed in a simple julata and with his entire body painted in divers colors, the boy being honored is surrounded by all the invited caciques, who form a closed circle and go around and around the young man, singing for a period of two to three hours.

When this ceremony has ended they go on to eat and drink and the fiesta lasts from two to four days, that is, until the food and drinks are exhausted.

Astronomy. Each new moon is a month and 14 moons are a year. The sun is called paphúty; the moon calipahú-quethy; the month paphuyty; the stars perphaty; the sky pipháty; the earth piphéytó.

Aldeas. In the municipio of Miranda there exist approximately from 12,000 to 14,000 Terena Indians and a large number of aldeas, among which I cite only those that I visited, the main ones being those called: Agachy, Boquehina, Marro, Marrinho, Ipeque, Santa Ana, and Caytapé. All the aldeas show the same type of construction, which is rustic, the houses or ranchos consisting of thin walls of bamboo with a roof of straw or palm leaves. One aldea differs from another only in the greater or lesser number of ranchos.

Agachy Aldea. This aldea has 26 ranchos, the largest being from 8 to 10 meters long by 3 to 5 meters wide; it is inhabited by 367 Indians.

/90 cont. /

361 Boquehina Aldea. It has 18 ranchos, some from 6 to 8
342 meters long by 3 or 4 wide; it is inhabited by 298 Indians.
162
621 Marro Aldea. It has 24 ranchos, some from 9 to 10 meters
long by 4 to 5 meters wide and other smaller ones; 386 Indians
live in it.

Marrinho Aldea. It has 15 ranchos, the largest from 8 to
10 meters long by 2 to 4 meters wide; 257 Indians live there.

Ipéqué Aldea. It has 11 ranchos, some from 5 to 7 meters
long /91/ by 2 to 4 meters wide, and others smaller. In it
live 246 Indians.

Santa-Ana Aldea. It has 23 ranchos, some from 6 to 10
meters long by 3 to 4 meters wide, with 379 Indians.

Caytapé Aldea. It has 19 ranchos from 8 to 10 meters
long by 3 to 5 meters wide, and 315 Indians.

142 Somatic data. The Terena have dark copper-colored skin,
ugly flat face, low forehead, black hair, straight and thick,
scanty beard, black eyes, a small nose, small mouth, strong,
very white teeth, small ears, small hands and feet.

352 The rancho. The interior of the rancho of these Indians
[237] shows rustic bamboo beds covered with the skin of a cow or
of some other wild animal. The hide serves as a mattress,
[445] the pillows are small bags stuffed with straw, there are in ad-
dition in the hut several hammocks, several clay pots for water,
and some rustic benches, they have no table, their table is the
ground.

353 The kitchen. This is a very simple rancho, or better said
343 a straw roof, some two meters square and a meter and a half
high, under which they keep dishes, pots, and other kitchen
utensils.

771 Worship. The Terena believe that there is a God in the
825 sky and they believe in the virtues of the tail of the rattlesnake;
787 which has the gift of being able to communicate with the souls
796 in the other world. The only religious fiesta that they celebrate
[82] is the one which corresponds to our Holy Week; it is the passage
of the seven stars; this fiesta lasts seven days.